

16 APR 1963

P-Louchheim, Donald
De Vosjoly, Thiraud
SOC. 4.01.2 Topaz
Uris, Leon

De Gaulle's Office Scores Spy Report

By Donald H. Louchheim
Washington Post Foreign Service

PARIS, April 15 — Spokesmen for President de Gaulle today dismissed as "completely ridiculous and the highest absurdity" charges that a Soviet agent was an influential member of the French government.

The charges were raised in London Sunday newspaper reports on the memoirs of a former French Secret Service official, who quit his post in Washington to "defect" to the United States.

The memoirs, written by Philippe Thiraud de Vosjoly, are due to appear next week in the London Sunday Times and Life magazine, Thiraud de Vosjoly's story is reported to be the basis for the best-selling novel "Topaz," in which a pro-American French spy discovers that one of his most important and influential bosses is a Russian agent.

The French statement today, issued by de Gaulle's Elysee Palace office, was the first official comment on the issue since it was first raised in "Topaz" last fall. Author Leon Uris insisted at the time that the theme of the novel was based on "reliable information."

Novel Criticized

On the surface, at least, the reported substance of Thiraud de Vosjoly's memoirs would appear to underpin "Topaz's" fictional plot with a more solid basis of fact. Most ob-

servers here, however, consider the main brunt of the novel's accusations to be outrageously fanciful.

They point out, for example, that Uris seems to have chosen facts for his novel that supported his thesis while ignoring those that would have contradicted or weakened it.

Regardless of whether the memoirs add anything to "Topaz's" charges of a Soviet master spy, their publication could prove explosive in terms of sensitive Franco-American relations.

In the past few months, the French government has been making a major public relations effort to warm up its frozen relations with Washington.

On April 3, de Gaulle attempted to break the ice himself in his statement on Vietnam, in which he praised President Johnson's peace initiative with a rare tribute.

Smile Campaign

Other officials have also been pursuing a smile campaign toward the United States and Americans taking great pains to portray France as a faithful, loyal and cooperative friend.

To be sure, the substance of French policy, which opposes American goals on many fronts that are considered vital to French interests has shown no sign of alteration. But there has been an unmistakable desire here to soften



Associated Press

JACK PROFUMO

... this zest is back

the tone and blunt the biting style of this opposition.

The Thiraud de Vosjoly memoirs could nip this evolution in the bud. For one thing, the major political theme of the memoirs appears to be that France is no longer a loyal ally and should not be trusted by the United States. For another, there is a suspicion here that the memoirs are a put-up job, supported by the U.S. Government to discredit France.

First Hint Published

This suspicion has aired last week by the satirical weekly Canard Enchaîné, which published the first hint that the memoirs would surface.

French newspapers ignored the Canard article, and their initial reaction to the more substantial and authoritative London press reports has been cautious. But, because of the Easter holidays, the press here has failed to bring out its big guns on the issue.